REMARKS

A Substitute Specification and Abstract is submitted herewith to place the case in better English form. The Substitute Specification and Abstract contains no new matter. In order that the examiner can satisfy himself in this regard, also submitted herewith is a marked-up copy of the original Specification and Abstract from which the Substitute Specification and Abstract was typed.

Respectfully submitted,

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DESCRIPTION DT09 Rec'd PCT/PTO 23 JUN 2004

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING ~~RIGHT INFORMATION, AND COMPUTER PROGRAM FOR ACHIEVING SAME~~ ELECTRONIC TICKETS AND COUPONS

Cross Reference to Related Applications

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a system for providing an electronic ticket or an electronic coupon to a consumer, and to a computer program therefore.

BACKGROUND ART

In recent years, electronic tickets have been used as ~~which are~~ admission tickets in electronic form for concert, movie, and the like. Also, electronic coupons have been used ~~which are coupons~~ in electronic form ~~usable~~ in various stores. Such electronic tickets ~~or electric~~ and coupons are substantially utilized as follows.

(1) An electronic ticket or an electronic coupon is stored in an IC card (or a portable telephone with a built-in IC chip, or the like).

(2) A user takes the IC card to a concert hall or a store.

(3) Contents of the IC card are read out by an information reader disposed at an admission gate of the concert hall or the store, and then the contents of the electronic ticket or the electronic coupon are confirmed.

(4) This permits admission into the concert hall, discount sale of merchandise, or the like.

Thus, there is no need to use a printed paper ticket or coupon ~~which is printed on a paper~~, thereby saving the trouble of issuing and mailing tickets or coupons ~~to a large extent~~.

However, the conventional method of utilizing ~~the~~ an electronic ticket or coupon has ~~a~~ the problem that information is not sufficiently utilized. For instance, since most ~~of~~ IC cards have stored therein their owner's names or the like, when the information reader reads the contents of the IC card, information indicating who enter~~s~~ing a concert hall, ~~where~~ the location of the concert hall ~~is~~, and ~~what~~ the time of entry ~~the user enters the hall~~ will be generated. Although this information is ~~extremely~~ potentially useful for sales strategy and marketing ~~of a company or the like~~, it is not actually used at all in the prior art method. This problem ~~will be raised~~ is also present in use of ~~the~~ an electronic coupon ~~in the same way.~~

~~DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION~~ SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide a system and computer program suitable for use in ~~information~~ development of strategy by the company utilizing ~~without wasting~~ the foregoing information which is otherwise wasted.

In one aspect, the present invention relates to a ~~system, method, and computer program having the following aspects, for example~~.

(1) A system for providing right information ~~comprises~~ comprising: memory means for storing a right information group composed of a plurality of ~~pieces~~ items of right information which are provided to a user, and right information managing means that includes ~~said memory means~~, a customer management means for managing information about a customer including prediction information for predicting an action of said customer, wherein said right information managing means ~~accepts~~ receives the customer information from customer management means ~~for managing information about a customer, performs a searching process for predetermined right information from~~ searches to locate, within said right information group, rights information related to the predicted action based on information ~~included in the customer information~~, and provides ~~said~~ the related right information ~~searched for~~ to right receiving means ~~for causing the user to receive a right~~.

(2) The store visit information may include user ~~specifying~~ identification information for the prediction

Rights information receiving means for notifying a user of right.

identifying
~~specifying~~ a user visiting a store, and ~~said~~ right information is provided to the
identified the identification
user ~~specified~~ by ~~said~~ user ~~specifying~~ information.

¶ Preferably, the
~~(3) Said~~ memory means includes a contact address of the user, and

~~said~~ right information managing means informs ~~said~~ contact address
the
that the right information has been provided.

No ¶ → ¶ In another preferred embodiment, the
~~(4) Said~~ right receiving means ~~is yet to be transmitted right information~~
is storage means for storing the right information before it is transmitted to
carrying means for carrying the right information.
by the customer

¶ The
~~(5) Said~~ customer information may includes used-right information ~~that is~~ used
pertaining to rights
by the ~~user~~, ~~and~~ with
customer

No ¶ → ~~said~~ searching ~~process is~~ to ~~search for the~~ right information that is
locate
more usable than ~~said~~ used-right information, ~~from said right information~~
the
~~group.~~

¶ ~~(6)~~ The right information provided to ~~said~~ right receiving means ~~is~~ may relate to
the
~~information~~ usable in the store ~~used~~ by the user
where acquired or

~~(7) The right information provided to said right receiving means is right~~
~~information~~ usable in a subsidiary of the store ~~used~~ by the user.
where acquired

~~(8) Said customer information includes prediction element information for~~
~~predicting an action, and~~

~~said searching process is to search for the right information about the~~
~~action predicted based on said prediction element information, from said~~
~~right information group.~~

¶ Preferably, the
~~(9) Said~~ right information managing means provides ~~said~~ right information
the related
before
~~until~~ a presupposed action ~~for prediction~~, on which the predicted action is
based, is completed.

The may
~~(10) Said~~ customer information includes inducing ~~element~~ information for
inducing an action, and

wherein said searching process is to search for the right information related to about the action to be induced based on said inducing element information, within the from said right information group,

(11) Said right information managing means provides said right information before until a presupposed action for inducement, on which the action to be induced is based, is completed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a schematical view of an apparatus to which the invention is applied;

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing a membership file;

Fig. 3 is a diagram showing a folder management file;

Fig. 4 is a diagram showing a screen for confirming and downloading the folder;

Fig. 5 is a diagram showing memory contents of an IC card;

Fig. 6 is a diagram showing store visit information;

Fig. 7 is a diagram showing a provided-right file;

Fig. 8 is a diagram showing a transmission right information;

Fig. 9 is a diagram showing a screen for confirming and downloading the folder;

Fig. 10 is a diagram showing memory contents of an IC card;

Fig. 11 is a diagram showing store visit information;

Fig. 12 is a diagram showing a provided-right file;

Fig. 13 is a diagram showing store visit information;

Fig. 14 is a diagram showing a provided-right file;

Fig. 15 is a diagram showing store visit information;

Fig. 16 is a diagram showing a provided-right file;

Fig. 17 is a diagram showing store visit information;

Fig. 18 is a diagram showing a provided-right file;

Fig. 19 is a diagram showing store visit information; and

Fig. 20 is a diagram showing a provided-right file.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

First Embodiment of the Invention

The first preferred embodiment of the invention will be explained with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram showing hardware required for practice of the invention as including its associated surroundings.

Such hardware is composed of a management server 1 (a server used by a company which manages right information), an in-store terminal 2 (a computer disposed in a store, an event hall, or the like), a receiving server 3 (a server for receiving the right information), and a PC 4 (a computer owned by a user).

The management server 1, the in-store terminal 2, the receiving server 3, and the PC 4 are connected to one another via Internet 5 (communicating means) so as to transmit and receive data therebetween.

The management server 1, the in-store terminal 2, the receiving server 3, and the PC 4 each have, built-in, a memory for storing data, a data transmitter for transmitting data, and a data receiver for receiving data built-in, and transmit and receive data using them.

Each memory has a computer program required to carry out the invention and predetermined data stored therein. Each of the foregoing devices is given a command based on its associated computer program to process corresponding data in carrying out the invention.

The in-store terminal 2 has a built-in reader/writer for reading and writing data stored in the IC card.

The PC 4 includes a display monitor 11 for displaying data, a keyboard for data input 12, a mouse 13, and a reader/writer 14 for reading and writing data from and in the IC card. Into the reader/writer 14, the IC card 15 may be inserted, ~~so that~~ the data ~~is read and written~~.

~~It should be noted that~~ The management server 1 functions as right information managing means, the in-store terminal 2 as customer managing means, the receiving server 3 as right receiving means, the IC card 15 as carrying means, the memory built into the managing server 1 as memory means, and the memory built into the receiving server 3 as yet-to-be-transmitted right information storage means.

~~Now, the outline of the present invention will be explained hereinafter~~. The present invention ~~is to~~ provide an electronic ticket and/or ~~the~~ electronic coupon, or the like for customers who visit stores selling merchandise or event halls, thereby attracting a large base of customers, improving the drawing power of an event hall, and promoting the sales of merchandise, or the like.

~~Then, a condition (precondition) which is required to explain the preferred embodiment will be described below~~.

Suppose, for example, Mr. Kazuo Mita, who lives in Tokyo, is a member of a service including provision of electronic tickets and coupons, ~~which are provided~~ by a company called Dream Company. The Dream Company deals in admission tickets for various events, coupons of various stores, or the like, and recently handles electronic tickets or coupons. An electronic ticket or coupon is ~~constituted by~~ digitized version of the contents of an admission ticket or coupon, which is stored and carried in an IC chip built-in, ~~which~~ In this manner in a portable telephone or the like with an IC card or

provides a system in which a user carrying the ticket or coupon can enter the event hall or use the coupon. Mr. Mita, ~~who is a member,~~ owns an IC card 15 (see Fig.1) for storing electronic tickets and/or electronic coupons.

The management server 1, managed by the Dream Company, stores therein a membership file (see Fig.2) composed of a plurality of membership records. ~~As Mita's~~ information, "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita/ Address: o-o-o Akasaka Minato-ku Tokyo/ Telephone Number: 03-3582-XXXX/ Mail Address: ooo@ΔΔΔ.com/ Folder Number: F123/..." is stored. "Folder Number: F123" is a number ~~to~~ manage the electronic ticket and coupon owned by Mr. Mita. For example, when Mr. Mita owns the electronic coupon "Pastry Shop oo 200 yen off (7788-1)" and the electronic ticket "ΔΔ Stadium, pro baseball oo vs. xx unreserved bleacher seat admission ticket (0025-701)", "Folder Number: F123" is related (linked) to "Pastry Shop oo 200 yen off (7788-1)" and "ΔΔ Stadium, pro baseball oo vs. xx unreserved bleacher seat admission ticket (0025-701)" , which are stored in a folder management file stored in the receiving server 3 (see Fig. 3). When Mr. Mita uses the PC 4 to confirm ~~contents of~~ his/~~her own~~ right, the display monitor 11 of the PC 4 displays the right ~~contents~~ in ~~such a~~ manner ~~as that disclosed~~ in Fig. 4, i.e., ~~such that~~ the ticket or coupon ~~is~~ included in the folder F123. Thus, ~~contents of~~ the owned ticket or the like are displayed in a folder format, thereby making it possible for a user (Mr. Mita) to easily confirm the contents.

~~Now, a processing procedure~~ according to the present invention will ~~be explained hereinafter. The invention~~ is carried out ~~in the~~ following ~~procedure.~~ <Transmission of Customer Information: STEP 1> → <Rights Information Search and Transmission: STEP 2> → <Rights Information Downloading: STEP 3>. These steps will be described below.

Transmission of Customer Information: STEP 1

For example, Mr. Mita enters a hamburger shop named "oo Burger" to have lunch. In this oo Burger shop, an in-store terminal 2 (see Fig. 1) is disposed. When he inserts his IC card into an IC card slot of a reader/writer an IC card ~~which is disposed in~~ of the in-store terminal 2, an electronic coupon that will be usable the next time he comes to the shop, is entered into Mr. Mita's folder. It should be noted that Mr. Mita's IC card 15 pre-stores therein information as shown in Fig. 5. When Mr. Mita decides to purchase a hamburger, he passes the IC card 15 to a clerk. Then, the clerk inserts the IC card 15 into the IC card receiver. Then, the in-store terminal 2 reads the contents stored in the IC card 15. Based on the information read, the in-store terminal compiles the store visit information shown in Fig. 6, for example, "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita/ Store Number: 9715/ Store Name: oo Burger/ Date and Time of Entering Store: December 5, 2001, p.m. 3:00/ Used Right: None". It transmits or sends this store visit information to the management server 1. The server 1 receives and stores the information, thus transmitted. Within this information, "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita" are the contents that have been read from the IC card 15, and "Date and Time of Entering Store" is the information that has been read from a clock or the like built into the in-store terminal 2. The other information has been pre-stored in the in-store terminal 2. It should be noted that, in the preferred embodiment, the membership number functions as user specifying information, and the store number as store specifying information.

Right Information Search and Transmission: STEP 2

In the management server 1 stores a provided-right file such as that shown

in Fig. 7 is stored. This provided-right file is composed of a plurality of provided-right records, each of which relates (links) an electronic coupon or ticket provided by ~~each~~ a store (or ~~each~~ event hall) to the store number and the store name.

The management server 1 searches for or retrieves (carries out search processing) a provided-right file by designating the store visit information, namely, "Store Number: 9715" as a retrieval key. Accordingly, the provided -right record "Store Number: 9715/ Store Name: oo Burger/ Right To be Provided (Ticket Number): 200 yen off coupon of oo Burger (9715-1)" is found and retrieved ~~or found~~ as shown in Fig. 7, thereby specifying a right to be provided. It should be noted that "200 yen off coupon (9715-1)" included in this provided-right records is an example of ~~functions as~~ right information, and the provided-right file including a plurality of items of right information as a right information group.

Then, the management server 1 searches through membership file by designating the store visit information, namely, "Membership Number: M356" as a retrieval key. Thus, Mr. Mita's membership record such as that shown in Fig. 2 is found, so that the management server 1 specifies Mr. Mita's "Folder Number: F123" and "Mail Address: ooo@ΔΔΔ.com".

Next, the management server 1 ~~makes or~~ generates transmission right information, namely, "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita/ Folder of Provision Destination: F123/ Provided Right: 200 yen off coupon of oo Burger (9715-1)", as shown in Fig. 8, based on the retrieved membership record, and the provided-right record, or the like, and then transmits it to the receiving server 3, ~~This receiving server 3~~ which stores this right information in its memory.

At the same time, the management server 1 sends a message, ~~that,~~

e.g., "A new electronic ticket or coupon has been ~~provided~~ added to your folder", to Mr. Mita's e-mail address "ooo@ΔΔΔ.com". It is noted that in this embodiment, the e-mail address functions as a contact address.

~~In~~ The receiving server 3, as described above, ~~is~~ stores a folder management file such as that shown in Fig. 3. Such a folder management file is composed of a plurality of folder management records, each of which relates (links) the folder number to an owned right.

The receiving server 3 searches through the folder management file by designating the transmission right information "Folder of Provision Destination: F123" as a retrieval key. Thus, the folder management record "Folder Number: F123/ Pastry Shop oo 200 yen off (7788-1), ΔΔ Stadium, pro baseball oo vs. xx unreserved bleacher seat admission ticket (0025-701)" is ~~found out~~ located and retrieved as shown in Fig. 3. Then, the receiving server 3 adds the record "200 yen off coupon of oo Burger (9715-1)" (which is an electronic coupon included in the transmission right information shown in Fig. 8) to the folder management record (see Fig. 3). That is, "200 yen off coupon of oo Burger (9715-1)" is related (linked) to "Folder Number: F123" to be stored. As a result, Mr. Mita's folder management record ~~has~~ now includes the contents of "Folder Number: F123/ Pastry Shop oo 200 yen off (7788-1), ΔΔ Stadium, pro baseball oo vs. xx unreserved bleacher seat admission ticket (0025-701), 200 yen off coupon of oo Burger (9715-1)~~(not shown)~~".

~~E~~Right Information Downloading: STEP 3

Suppose Mr. Mita returns home at night after having lunch at the oo Burger, and receives an e-mail using the PC 4. The received mail from the management server 1 includes a message that "A new electronic ticket or coupon has been provided". Mr. Mita gains access to a web page operated by the Dream Company so as to confirm and download the provided electronic

ticket and/or coupon. After the information "Folder Number: F123" or a predetermined password is inputted and sent, the contents such as ~~those~~ shown in Fig. 9 will be displayed on a display screen 11 of the PC 4.

Because Mr. Mita is going to have a meal at the ○○ Burger next week, he ~~clicks~~ touches a "download" ~~part~~ window which is located next to the "200 yen off coupon of ○○ Burger (9715-1)" ~~part~~ window. Thus, the PC 4 ~~makes~~ transmits a downloading request for information indicating "Ticket Number of Interest: 9715-1" ~~(not shown)~~ responsive to receipt of the reque~~and~~ ~~transmits it~~ to the receiving server 3. The server 3 ~~receiving it~~ sends an electronic coupon for "200 yen off coupon of ○○ Burger (9715-1)" to the PC 4, while canceling the transmitted ticket from the folder management record. The PC 4 receiving the electronic coupon stores the received electronic coupon in the IC card 15 via the reader/writer 14 for the IC card. Accordingly, downloading of right information is completed, ~~so that~~ with the IC card 15 ~~has~~ having stored therein the resultant contents such as ~~those~~ shown in Fig. 10.

After some days, Mr. Mita goes to the ○○ Burger, and passes the IC card 15 to a clerk or cashier in paying. When the clerk inserts the IC card 15 into the in-store terminal 2, the in-store terminal 2 reads ~~out the contents of~~ the electronic coupon, and then subtracts 200 yen from the total price, while canceling the electronic coupon "200 yen off coupon of ○○ Burger (9715-1)" stored in the IC card 15. This allows Mr. Mita to get a discount of 200 yen off at the ○○ Burger.

The provision of the electronic coupon to the visiting customer (Mr. Mita) encourages the customer to visit the store (○○ Burger) again, leading to increased sales for the ○○ Burger and ~~That is, this enables~~ attracting a large base of customers.

[Second Embodiment of the Invention]

~~Although~~ Whereas, in the foregoing first embodiment, ~~a case where the~~ provision of an

This second embodiment will serve to describe

for use a

electronic coupon ~~usable in the~~ store ~~is provided~~ has been described, a case where an admission ticket (electronic ticket) for a movie, a concert, or the like is provided ~~will be explained in this embodiment~~. It should be noted that the present embodiment is similar to the first embodiment in most part ~~thereof~~. That is, ~~different points~~ differences between this embodiment and the first embodiment are in the contents of store visit information, and the contents of the provided-right file. The ~~other~~ remaining ~~part~~ features of the present embodiment ~~is~~ are substantially the same as ~~that~~ those of the first embodiment. ~~Now, the~~ Only the features that are different ~~points~~ will be described hereinafter.

First, the contents of store visit information will be explained. The visit information in this embodiment might have, by way of example the ~~has the~~ following contents: "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita/ Store Number: 5114/ Store Name: oo Cinema/ Date and Time of Entering Store: December 5, 2001, p.m. 3:00/ Used Right: None" as shown in Fig. 11. That is, when Mr. Mita ~~is going~~ goes to watch a movie at the oo Cinema, the in-store terminal 2 disposed at an entrance gate of the cinema reads out the contents of the IC card 15, and ~~makes the~~ generates store visit information based on the read contents.

Now, the contents of the provided-right file will be explained. The provided-right file has the following contents: "Store Number: 5114/ Store Name: oo Cinema/ Right To be Provided (Ticket Number): Movie entitled "Summer in Florida", Admission Ticket (5114-1)" as shown in Fig. 12. That is, the right to be provided for Mr. Mita is an admission ticket for the movie entitled "Summer in Florida", which will be screened at the oo Cinema next month.

This electronic ticket is ~~subjected to~~ the same process ~~ing as that in~~ manner as in the first embodiment, ~~to be~~ sent to the receiving server 3, and then downloaded (stored) into ~~the~~ Mr. Mita's IC card 15. This enables Mr. Mita to

watch the "Summer in Florida" movie which will be screened at the ○○ Cinema next month, at a low price or at no charge. Thus, the present invention can handle not only coupons for stores selling merchandise, but also admission tickets for watching a movie, a concert, a sport, or the like. In short, the term "store" ~~of the invention implies any~~ providing places in a broad sense, such as a store selling merchandise, a store giving service, a hall where an event is held, and the like.

~~[~~Third Embodiment of the Invention~~]~~

~~In~~ the present embodiment, a case where Mr. Mita brings the electronic coupon, which ~~is~~ provided in ~~the case of~~ the first embodiment, to the ○○ Burger again, ~~will be explained.~~ The present embodiment is similar to the first embodiment in most part ~~thereof. That is, different points~~ between this embodiment and the first embodiment are the contents of store visit information, the contents of a provided-right file, and the ~~contents of~~ searching ~~process~~ performed by the management server 1. The other ~~remaining part~~ of the present embodiment is substantially the same as ~~that~~ of the first embodiment. ~~Now, the~~ only different ~~points~~ will be described hereinafter.

First, the contents of store visit information will be explained. The store visit information in this embodiment has the following contents: "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita/ Store Number: 9715/ Store Name: ○○ Burger/ Date and Time of Entering Store: December 5, 2001, p.m. 3:00/ Used Right: 9715-1" as shown in Fig. 13. The different ~~point~~ between this embodiment and the first embodiment is that "Used Right" in the first embodiment is "none", ~~but~~ in this embodiment "9715-1". The "Used Right" means the electronic coupon (or electronic ticket) that has been used by Mr. Mita at the ○○ Burger. That is, the in-store terminal 2 of the ○○ Burger

reads the electronic coupon from the IC card 15 ~~storing~~ containing the contents ~~such as those~~ as shown in Fig. 10, and adds it when ~~making~~ generating store visit information. It should be noted that in the present embodiment, the "used right ~~functions as~~" represents "used-right information."

Next, the contents of the provided-right file will be explained. The provided-right file has the following contents: "Store Number: 9715/ Store Name: ○○ Burger/ Right To be Provided (Ticket Number): 200 yen off coupon of ○○ Burger (9715-1), 500 yen off coupon of ○○ Burger (9715-2), 700 yen off coupon of ○○ Burger (9715-3)", as shown in Fig. 14. The difference between this embodiment and ~~point from~~ the first embodiment is that in this embodiment a plurality of (three) rights are ~~to be~~ provided, which are stored in order of increasing value to a customer. In this embodiment, "500 yen off coupon of ○○ Burger (9715-2)", and "700 yen off coupon of ○○ Burger (9715-3)" ~~serve as~~ are more valuable rights information than the used right.

Now, the searching ~~process~~ performed by the management server 1 will be explained below. This process is substantially the same as that of the first embodiment, but ~~different~~ different therefrom ~~in the following point.~~ as follows.

No # The used right of the store visit information is "9715-1". Thus, the management server 1 searches for a ticket corresponding to "9715-2", which is obtained by adding "1" to the foregoing "9715-1", and sets this ticket as a provided right of the transmission right information. That is, the management server 1 ~~makes~~ generates the transmission right information "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita/ Folder of Provision Destination: F123/ Provided Right: 500 yen off coupon of ○○ Burger (9715-2)" (not shown), and transmits it to the receiving server 3. This coupon is ~~subjected to the same processing as that of~~ processed as in the first embodiment, to be downloaded into ~~the~~ Mr. Mita's IC card 15.

~~Providing again a~~ customer with ~~the~~ electronic coupon that is more valuable than the used coupon enhances the possibility that the customer visits the store again, ~~thereby surely permit~~ attracting a larger base of customers.

~~Fourth Embodiment of the Invention~~

~~Although,~~ in the first embodiment, ~~the~~ electronic coupon usable at the oo Burger is provided to the customer who has visited the oo Burger, ~~case where~~ an electronic coupon usable at a subsidiary of the oo Burger is ~~provided will be explained in this embodiment.~~ The present embodiment is similar to the first embodiment in most ~~part thereof. That is, different points~~ between this embodiment and the first embodiment are the contents of store visit information, the contents of a provided-right file, and the ~~contents of~~ searching process performed by the management server 1. The other ~~remaining part~~ of the present embodiment is substantially the same as ~~that~~ of the first embodiment. ~~Now, the~~ only different points will be described hereinafter.

First, the contents of the store visit information will be explained. The store visit information in this embodiment has the following contents: "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita/ Store Number: 9715/ Store Name: oo Burger/ Date and Time of Entering Store: December 5, 2001, p.m. 3:00/ Used Right: None" as shown in Fig. 15. This information is ~~completely~~ the same as that of the first embodiment.

Next, the contents of the provided-right file will be explained. The provided-right file has the following contents: "Store Number: 9715/ Store Name: oo Burger/ Right To be Provided (Ticket Number): 100 yen off coupon of Coffee Shop ΔΔ (9715-101)", as shown in Fig. 16. ~~The different point~~ from the first embodiment is that the right to be provided is not ~~the~~ electronic

coupon usable at the ○○ Burger, but ~~the~~ electronic coupon usable at the Coffee Shop ΔΔ (which is a subsidiary of the ○○ Burger). It should be noted that in the present embodiment, "100 yen off coupon of Coffee Shop ΔΔ (9715-101)" ~~functions as~~ the "right information usable in its subsidiary store".

~~If,~~ based on this store visit information, the same searching process as that of the first embodiment ~~and the other processing are carried out~~, Mr. Mita obtains ~~the~~ coupon ~~, namely,~~ "100 yen off coupon of Coffee Shop ΔΔ (9715-101)", ~~leading to~~ enhanced possibility that Mr. Mita visits the Coffee Shop ΔΔ. This succeeds in attracting a large base of customers to the subsidiary (one of group companies).

It should be noted that the "store" of the "subsidiary store" ~~implies any providing places~~ in a broad sense, for example, not only stores selling merchandise and ~~giving~~ service, but also halls or the like where events are held, as described above.

~~Fifth~~ Embodiment of the Invention

In the ~~present~~ embodiment, ~~a case where~~ a customer's action is predicted based on customer information, and then an electronic coupon or the like ~~to~~ conform to the predicted action is provided, ~~will be explained.~~ The ~~present~~ embodiment is similar to the first embodiment in most ~~part thereof~~. ~~That is, different points~~ between this embodiment and the first embodiment are the contents of store visit information, the contents of a provided-right file, the ~~contents of~~ searching process performed by the management server 1, and ~~the contents of~~ transmission ~~process of transmission~~ right information. ~~The~~ other ~~remaining part~~ of the ~~present~~ embodiment ~~is~~ substantially the same as ~~that~~ of the first embodiment. ~~Now,~~ the only different ~~points~~ will be described hereinafter. In the case of ~~the present~~ embodiment, downloading of

the electronic coupon or the like is not performed by the PC 4, but ~~should be~~ is preferably performed by a portable compact computer, or a portable telephone with a built-in IC chip.

~~First, the contents of~~ Included within the customer information ~~will be explained. The~~ , the store visit information in this ~~embodiment has the following contents~~ fifth includes: "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita/ Store Number: 5114/ Store Name: oo Cinema/ Date and Time of Entering Store: December 5, 2001, p.m. 5:00/ Used Right: None", as shown in Fig. 17. This customer information is the same as that of the first embodiment. In the present embodiment, the date and time when the customer enters the store is the most important information. ~~It should be noted that in the embodiment, the date and time of the customer's entering the store~~ 2nd The serves as prediction ~~element~~ information.

Next, the contents of the provided-right file will be explained. The provided-right file has the following contents: "Store Number: 5114/ Store Name: oo Cinema/ Customer's Entering Time: p.m. 3:00-6:00/ Predicted Action: having dinner/ Action-Completion Prediction: in 90 minutes after entering/ Right To be Provided (Ticket Number): Free Coupon of Dessert at Restaurant oo (5114-101)", as shown in Fig. 18. The ~~different points~~ differences from the first embodiment are ~~that there are~~ the additionally provided data items of including the entering time, the predicted action, and the action-completion prediction, and that the ~~contents~~ nature of the right to be provided ~~are set~~ is based on the prediction "a customer who enters the cinema at p.m. 3:00 to p.m. 6:00 will have dinner after watching a movie". In this preferred embodiment, ~~as a~~ the right to be provided is ~~set~~ an electronic coupon usable at the Restaurant oo ~~which is suitable~~ for the dinner, e.g., "Free Coupon for Dessert at Restaurant oo (5114-101)". In ~~the~~ this fifth embodiment, this "Free Coupon for Dessert at

Restaurant oo (5114-101)" ~~coupon functions~~ as "right information ~~about~~ the predicted action". Further, in the embodiment, "a presupposed action ~~for prediction~~" ~~corresponds to~~ "an action of watching a movie", and "~~until~~ the presupposed action ~~for prediction~~ is completed" ~~corresponds to~~ "by December 5, 2001, p.m. 6:30", which time is obtained by adding action-completion prediction time (90 minutes after entering) to December 5, 2001, p.m. 5:00. (~~Note that~~ the invention is not limited ~~to this case.~~)

~~Now,~~ the searching process performed by the management server 1 ~~will be explained below. This process~~ is substantially the same as that of the first embodiment, but ~~different~~ therefrom ~~in the following point.~~

~~The entering time in the customer information is "December 5, 2001, p.m. 5:00". Thus,~~ the management server 1 searches for a provided-right record of interest from the provided-right file by designating "Store Number: 5114" and "Entering Time: p.m. 5:00" as retrieval keys. As a result, the provided-right record such as that shown in Fig. 18 is ~~found out~~, and based on this record, transmission right information is ~~made~~.

~~Now,~~ transmission processing of the transmission right information to the receiving server 3, ~~which processing~~ is performed by the management server 1, ~~will be explained below. This transmission process~~ is substantially the same as that of the first embodiment, but ~~different~~ therefrom in ~~the following point.~~

~~In the present embodiment,~~ a customer's next action is predicted, and then an electronic coupon or the like, ~~to~~ conform to the predicted action, is provided. Therefore, if the electronic coupon to be provided does not reach a customer until the customer (Mr. Mita) leaves ~~a cinema or a~~ movie theater (that is, until the presupposed action ~~for prediction~~ is completed), it is meaningless. The timing of transmission ~~is very important to transmission~~

of the transmission right information ~~according to~~ the present embodiment. ~~Hereinafter, the processing will be explained.~~

The entering time in the customer information ~~corresponds to~~ "December 5, 2001, p.m. 5:00", and the time when Mr. Mita will leave the cinema ~~corresponds to~~ "action-completion prediction: in 90 minutes after entering" (at earliest 90 minutes). Thus, the management server 1 calculates the transmission timing to obtain the result "from p.m. 5:00 to p.m. 6:30". During this time, the server 1 transmits the transmission right information to the receiving server 3. Accordingly, when Mr. Mita finishes watching the movie, the information "Free Coupon ~~of~~ Dessert at Restaurant ○○ (5114-101)" has been transmitted to ~~the~~ Mita's folder. Therefore, when Mr. Mita, who is ~~just~~ hungry after the movie, checks e-mails on his portable telephone or the like, a message that a new coupon has been provided is ~~sent to the~~ e-mail, thereby enhancing the possibility that Mr. Mita visits the Restaurant ○○. This enables provision of ~~the~~ electronic coupon or the like that conforms to a customer's action, resulting in increased opportunities for the customer to use the electronic coupons ~~and so on.~~

It should be noted that prediction of ~~a next~~ action may be ~~carried out~~ based on the user's sex, age bracket, the number of companions, or the like.

[Sixth Embodiment of the Invention]

In the foregoing fifth embodiment, a customer's action is predicted, and ~~the~~ electronic coupon or the like ~~to~~ conform to the predicted action is ~~provided~~. On the other hand, ~~in the present~~ embodiment, ~~a case where~~ an electronic coupon or the like to induce a customer's action ~~is provided will be explained~~. The present embodiment is similar to the first embodiment in most ~~part thereof. That is, different points~~ between this embodiment and the first embodiment are the contents of store visit information, the contents of a

provided-right file, and the ~~contents of~~ searching process performed by the management server 1. The other ~~remaining part~~ of ~~the present~~ embodiment ~~is~~ substantially the same as ~~that~~ of the first embodiment. ~~Now, the~~ only different ~~points~~ will be described hereinafter.

~~First, the contents of~~ the customer information ~~will be explained. The~~ store visit information in this embodiment has the following contents: "Membership Number: M356/ Member Name: Kazuo Mita/ Store Number: 6555/ Store Name: Pub oo/ Type: drinking/Date and Time of Entering Store: December 5, 2001, p.m. 7:00/ Used Right: None", as shown in Fig. 19. This customer information differs from that of the first embodiment in that ~~there is provided an~~ item "Type: drinking", ~~In this embodiment, this item "Type: drinking" functions~~ as inducing ~~element~~ information."

~~Next, the contents of the provided-right file will be explained.~~ The provided-right file has the following contents: "Store Number: 6555/ Store Name: Pub oo/ Type: drinking/ Action To be Induced: inducing the customer to go to Beef Bowl (which is called "Gyudon" in Japanese) Restaurant oo/ Action-Completion Prediction: in 60 minutes after entering/ Right To be Provided(Ticket Number): 100 yen off coupon of Beef Bowl Restaurant oo (5114-201)". The different ~~points~~ from the first embodiment are that there are additionally provided data items including the type, the action to be induced, and the action-completion prediction, and that the contents of the provided right ~~are set~~ based on the ~~following~~ object of inducement: "although most people want to eat Chinese noodles after drinking alcohol, a coupon induces them to go to the Beef Bowl Restaurant". It should be noted that in the present embodiment, "100 yen off coupon of Beef Bowl Restaurant oo (5114-201)" ~~functions~~ as "right information ~~about~~ the action to be induced". Further, in ~~the~~ embodiment, "presupposed action ~~for inducement~~"

~~corresponds to~~ is exemplified by "action of drinking and eating at the pub", and "~~until~~ before the presupposed action ~~for inducement~~ induced is completed" ~~corresponds to~~ is exemplified by "by December 5, 2001, p.m. 8:00," which time is obtained by adding an action-completion prediction time (60 minutes after entering) to December 5, 2001, p.m. 7:00. ~~(Note that the invention is not limited to this case.)~~

~~Now,~~ The searching process ~~performed~~ executed by the management server 1 ~~will be explained below. This searching process~~ is substantially the same as that of the first embodiment, but ~~different~~ therefrom in that the ~~following point.~~

~~The~~ type of the customer information (action type) is "drinking". Thus, the management server 1 searches for a ~~the~~ provided-right record of interest from the provided-right file by designating "Store Number: 6555" and "Type: drinking" as retrieval keys. As a result, ~~the~~ a provided-right record such as that shown in Fig. 20 is ~~found out~~ located.

~~Now,~~ The transmission ~~processing~~ of the transmission right information to the receiving server 3, which ~~processing~~ is performed by the management server 1, ~~will be explained below. This transmission process~~ is substantially the same as that of the first embodiment, but different therefrom in the following point.

In ~~the present~~ this sixth embodiment, ~~a customer's action is induced, and an~~ the electronic coupon or the like is designed to induce a customer to act in ~~that conforms to the action to be induced is provided~~ a desired manner. Therefore, if the electronic coupon to be provided does not reach a customer until after the customer (Mr. Mita) leaves the pub (that is, ~~until~~ after the presupposed action ~~for inducement~~ is completed), it is meaningless. The timing ~~of transmission is very important to transmission~~ of the transmission right information is very important in ~~according to~~ the present embodiment. ~~Hereinafter, the processing will be explained.~~

The ~~entering~~ entry date and time in the customer information ~~corresponds~~ is exemplified by

"December 5, 2001, p.m. 7:00", and the time when the customer will leave the pub corresponds to "action-start prediction: in 60 minutes after entering" (at earliest 60 minutes). Thus, the management server 1 calculates the transmission timing to obtain the result "from p.m. 7:00 to p.m. 8:00". During this time, the server 1 transmits the transmission right information to the receiving server 3. Accordingly, when Mr. Mita leaves the pub, the information "100 yen off coupon of Beef Bowl Restaurant ○○ (5114-201)" has been transmitted to the Mita's folder. Therefore, when Mr. Mita, who wants to eat Chinese noodles after leaving the Pub ○○, looks at his portable telephone, an e-mail saying "An electronic coupon has been transmitted to your folder." reaches in the same manner as the fifth embodiment. Then, he downloads this new electronic coupon, so that the "100 yen off coupon of Beef Bowl Restaurant ○○ (5114-201)". coupon is sent to Mr. Mita. (That is, this coupon is stored in the IC chip of Mr. Mita's portable telephone, and its contents are displayed on a display screen of the phone. This enhances the possibility of Mr. Mita's going to Beef Bowl Restaurant ○○, not to a Chinese noodle restaurant, thereby permitting inducement of the customer's action. That is, a utilization rate of the electronic coupon or the like provided by the Dream Company will be increased.

It should be noted that although in the foregoing, embodiments, specific cases have been explained, the invention is not limited thereto. For example, the following cases may be allowed.

(1) Although the electronic ticket for the movie and the electronic coupon provided at a hamburger shop have been explained in the foregoing embodiments, the electronic ticket or coupon according to the present invention may be usable in any event halls, any shops selling various merchandise or providing services, or the like.

(2) Although ~~the~~ electronic ticket or electronic coupon is sent to the yet-to-be-transmitted right information storage means in the foregoing embodiments, the electronic ticket or electronic coupon may be directly sent to right carrying means (means for carrying right information: for example, a portable telephone or a compact computer with an IC chip built-in).

(3) The contents of data are not limited to ~~those of data explained~~ in the foregoing embodiments, ~~That is,~~ any data will do as long as it has the same function.

(4) Hardware is not limited to ~~one as explained~~ in the foregoing embodiments, ~~That is,~~ any hardware will do as long as it has the same function. For example, the processing performed by the management server 1 and the processing performed by the receiving server 3 may be handled by only one server.

(5) The contents and procedure of the processing are not limited to those as explained in the foregoing embodiments. That is, any processing contents and processing procedure will do as long as they have the same functions.

(6) ~~An~~ expression "accept information (data)" means "receive information (data)". ~~Note that the expression "accept information (data)"~~ is not limited ~~only to "receive information (data)"~~. ~~An~~ expression "provide information (data)" means "transmit information (data)". ~~Note that the expression "provide information (data)"~~ is not limited ~~only to "transmit information (data)"~~.

(7) The term "customer" ~~implies~~ all customers or visitors ~~in any case~~ in a broad sense, for example, not only ~~in~~ the case of a customer actually coming ~~to~~ a store, but also ~~in~~ the case of the customer entering an event hall, inquiring of a store by a telephone, accessing a homepage, or the like.

(8) The data items of data ~~recorded~~ presented in the foregoing embodiments

are basically related (linked) to one another to be stored in the memory.

(9) The term "yet-to-be-transmitted right information storage means for storing right information before it is transmitted to the carrying means" ~~implies~~ has reference to the memory for storing (memorizing) the electronic ticket or the electronic coupon before it is downloaded via Internet into the portable telephone or the like with the IC card or IC chip built-in, ~~which can carry the right information. Note that the invention is not limited to this case~~.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

The present invention has the following effects.

(1) The present invention provides customers visiting a store with electronic tickets or electronic coupons, thereby improving repeat customer rate (the probability of customers visiting the store again), and attracting a large base of customers.

(2) Since the present invention provides electronic tickets or electronic coupons based on customer information, the electronic tickets or coupons provided conform to the customer's needs and actions. This ~~enables~~ provides effective ~~provision of electronic tickets or coupons, so that~~ utilization of information generated when the electronic ticket or coupon is ~~utilized can be sufficiently utilized.~~ surrendered.

(3) ~~Provision~~ Issuance of ~~the~~ an electronic ticket or electronic coupon usable in a store ~~where~~ visited by a customer visits ~~leads~~ tends to increase repeat customer rate. Thus, each store ~~permits~~ attracting attracts a large base of customers.

(4) ~~The~~ An electronic ticket or coupon ~~to be~~ newly provided is more ~~usable~~ useful than the ~~used~~ previously electronic ticket or coupon (used right), resulting in increased repeat customer rate.

(5) Provision of an electronic tickets or electronic coupons usable both in the store ~~where~~ visited by the customer ~~visits~~ and in its subsidiary (~~one of~~ group companies)

~~permits~~ attracting a large base of customers to ~~the~~ group companies.

(6) An action is predicted, and an electronic ticket or coupon that conforms to the predicted action is ~~provided~~, thereby enhancing the utilization rate of the electronic ticket or coupon.

(7) ~~Provision~~ of an electronic ticket or coupon inducing a ~~customer's~~ action can improve the pulling power of a store in which the electronic ticket or coupon is usable.

(8) If the electronic ticket or coupon is not provided until a presupposed action ~~for prediction~~ or a presupposed action ~~for inducement~~ is completed, provision of the electronic ticket or coupon is meaningless, because it cannot be used. In the present invention, the electronic ticket or coupon is provided ~~until~~ a next action is started after customer information is received.

(9) ~~The provision~~ of ~~the~~ electronic ticket or coupon is ~~informed a~~ customer by an e-mail or the like, so that the customer ~~may~~ know that a new electronic ticket or the like ~~is provided~~ to his/her own folder.

(10) Since, in the present invention, the electronic ticket or coupon is transmitted to yet-to-be-transmitted right information storage means ~~which is called~~ customer's folder, ~~application~~ usage of the ~~contents as~~ disclosed in Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-037078, entitled "a system for transferring an electronic ticket, and a computer program for achieving same" can be further expanded.

ABSTRACT

Electronic tickets, electronic coupons, or the like are ~~provided~~ issued to customers who visit stores selling merchandise or event halls, thereby ~~attracting a large~~ enlarging the base of customers, improving the pulling power of the event hall, promoting the sales of merchandise, ~~or the like~~ etc.

A system for providing right information ~~comprises~~ includes a management server with a memory ~~means~~ for storing a plurality of electronic tickets or coupons, ~~and a management server (1) that includes the memory means~~.

The managing ement server ~~(1) accepts~~ receives information on a customer from an in-store terminal ~~(2)~~, ~~performs a~~ searching es ~~process~~ for a ~~predetermined~~ electronic ticket or coupon based on the customer information, and ~~provides~~ issues the electronic ticket or coupon ~~searched for to a user~~ to the customer.